

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A workflow management method for previously defining a plurality of states and transitions between the states as a process definition to process a state transition for a process instance in response to an inputted state transition request, said method comprising:

a synchronous processing step for processing a state transition for a process instance during an interval of from accepting of said inputted state transition request to return of a response;

an asynchronous processing step for processing a state transition for a process instance after said inputted state transition request is accepted and a response is returned; and

a selecting step for selecting said synchronous processing step or said asynchronous processing step for execution based on inputted selection information, as a state transition process for a process instance associated for said inputted state transition request.

2. A workflow management method according to claim 1, wherein:

said selecting step includes generating a program for calling the processing step corresponding to the inputted selection information.

3. A workflow management method according to claim 1, wherein:

said selection information is previously defined synchronousness information.

4. A workflow management method according to claim 3, wherein:

said synchronousness information is included in said process definition.

5. A workflow management method according to claim 4, wherein:

said synchronousness information is included in environment information of a workflow application run time execution environment.

6. A workflow management method according to claim 3, wherein:

said synchronousness information is included in environment information of a workflow management program run time execution environment.

7. A workflow management method according to claim 4, wherein:

each transition definition between states has said synchronousness information.

8. A workflow management method according to claim 4, wherein:

each of said states has said synchronousness information.

9. A workflow management method according to claim 5, wherein:

each process definition has said synchronousness information.

10. A workflow management apparatus for previously defining a plurality of states possibly taken by a process instance, and transitions between the states as a process definition to process a state transition for the process instance in response to an inputted state transition request, said apparatus comprising:

synchronous processing means for processing a state transition for a process instance during an interval of from accepting of said inputted state transition request to return of a response;

asynchronous processing means for processing a state transition for a process instance after said inputted state transition request is accepted and a response is returned; and

selecting means for selecting said synchronous processing means or said asynchronous processing means for execution based on inputted selection information, as a state transition process for a process instance associated for said inputted state transition request.

11. A computer readable recording medium having stored thereon a workflow management program for previously defining a plurality of states possibly taken by a process instance, and transitions between the states as a process definition to process a state transition for the process instance in response to an inputted state transition request, said program

comprising:

a synchronous processing step for processing a state transition for a process instance from receipt of said inputted state transition request to return of a response;

an asynchronous processing step for processing a state transition for a process instance after said inputted state transition request is accepted and a response is returned; and

an executing step for selecting said synchronous processing step or said asynchronous processing step for execution based on inputted selection information as a state transition process for a process instance associated for said inputted state transition request.

12. A workflow management method comprising the steps of:

previously defining a plurality of states possibly taken by a process instance, and transitions between the states as a process definition;

inputting a state transition request; and

controlling execution of a state transition process for a process instance associated for said inputted state transition request based on inputted transition process control information.

13. A workflow management method according to claim 12, wherein:

said state transition process control

information includes priority information, said priority information being relied on when a plurality of said state transition requests should be processed, for selecting from said state transition requests a state transition request to be processed.

14. A workflow management method according to claim 12, wherein:

said state transition process control information includes available computer resource amount information, wherein said method further includes comparing the sum of a computer resource amount used for previously processed state transition requests and a computer resource amount used for said state transition request with a value defined by said available computer resource amount information to determine whether or not said state transition request is processed.

15. A workflow management method according to claim 14, wherein:

said computer resource amount is a main storage capacity used for processing said state transition request.

16. A workflow management method according to claim 14, wherein:

said computer resource amount is an auxiliary storage amount used for processing said state transition request.

17. A workflow management method according to

claim 14, wherein:

said computer resource amount is the number of threads used for processing said state transition request.

18. A workflow management method according to claim 12, wherein:

said transition process control information is previously defined transition process definition information.

19. A workflow management method according to claim 18, wherein:

said transition process definition information is included in said workflow management.

20. A workflow management method according to claim 18, wherein:

said transition process definition information is included in environment information of a workflow application run time execution environment.

21. A workflow management method according to claim 18, wherein:

said transition process definition information is included in environment information of a workflow management program run time execution environment.

22. A workflow management method according to claim 19, wherein:

each transition definition between the states has said transition process definition information.

23. A workflow management method according to claim 19, wherein:

each said states has said transition process definition information.

24. A workflow management method according to claim 19, wherein:

each process definition has said transition process definition information.

25. A computer-implemented workflow management program for previously defining a plurality of states possibly taken by a process instance, and transitions between the states as a process definition to process a state transition for the process instance in response to an input state transition request, said program causing the computer to perform:

synchronously processing a state transition for a process instance from receipt of said inputted state transition request to return of a response;

causing the computer to perform asynchronously processing a state transition for a process instance after said inputted state transition request is accepted and a response is returned; and

causing the computer to perform selecting said synchronous processing or said asynchronous processing for execution based on inputted selection information as a state transition process for a process instance associated for said input state transition request.